

PATERNAL VIOLENCE AND COMPASSION

• 83 •

his wife"; "The husband is the law unto his wife," the proverbs say. As a result of such a view of husband-wife relations, the husband had the right and duty to apply brutal force to his wife as a means of discipline, the same as to his children. "It is woman's fate to be always beaten," the people would say.³⁰

The description of folk life in the eastern parts of Russia corroborate this attitude toward wives as expressed in popular sayings. The informants tell of the "miserable fate of the women" (*nepriglyadnaya uchast zheny*),³¹ the constant fights of husband and wife (*muzh deretsya s zhenoi*), and the thrashing (*poboï*) to which the wives were exposed on the part of their husbands. In case of adultery the punishment for the woman was "merciless beating" (*neshchadnoe bitie*) or strangling (*udushenie*).³²

Domostroy, which was under the influence of Church teachings, agrees with this philosophy and practices and even offers elaborate and detailed precepts to the husband about how to treat his wife ". . . if the wife is not afraid of the punishment and does not follow the instructions, the husband should beat her." According to Domostroy only if the wife is blindly and unconditionally submissive "everything will run smoothly in the family." The wife must do everything "to please her husband and God and she must listen to him with fear and awe."³³

Domostroy was compiled primarily for the urban classes of the Czardom. Its rules reflect a certain deterioration in the status of women as they moved from the peasant to the urban level. In the cities, especially among the merchants, the women were confined to the *terem* (gynceum) and had less opportunity to work and earn for themselves. In the urban environment, the Turco-Mongol influences were therefore reinforced.

In the rural areas the women retained their role in economic production. The peasant women were thus enabled to retain some of the the Old-Slavonic traditions; they often knew how to assert themselves and influence family affairs. In a like manner, with the increasing opportunities for schooling in urban centers, a growing number of city women emancipated themselves from family ties and became economically and socially independent. In such circumstances also many women in the urban

593
562

[684]•

369
562

[677]